CALIFORNIA STORIES 2004-2005

A NEW APPROACH TO STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

A report on the California Council for the Humanities' California Stories initiative, 2004-2005

CALIFORNIA STORIES

Above: Rosa Loo, seen here with daughter Yeming, was interviewed for the Communities Speak project "Marin Stories"; Hari Singh, of Yuba City, participated in a project on Sikh history and life in California; family life, as documented by Orquidea Contreras for a youth photography project in Paso Robles.
Right: Ramon Ramirez at the dairy farm in Nicasio where he works. Ramirez was one of the participants in "Marin Stories," which used the stories of a diverse group of residents to examine the issue of affordable housing in Marin County.
Far right: Damariea Martinez (left) and Nierrah Williams learned about their neighborhood in a monthlong video camp sponsored by "I Am OMI" in San Francisco.

2004-2005

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HOW IMPORTANT ARE STORIES?

When we launched our California Stories initiative in 2002, we hoped to demonstrate that public humanities programs not only enrich audiences but also strengthen communities. By supporting projects that ask people to tell and share their stories, we hoped to show that these projects could increase understanding among diverse groups and move people to become more involved in their communities.

We had a hunch about what stories could accomplish from our decades of supporting public programs and from a public poll we commissioned early in 2001 that found that Californians believed telling and sharing stories was a good way to connect with fellow citizens. Now, some five years later, we have some promising evidence that stories can actually make communities stronger.

Through our California Stories initiative. we have conducted and supported hundreds of story-sharing programs in communities throughout the state, involving thousands of Californians in telling and listening to stories.

While we were supporting these story-sharing efforts, Harder+Company, an independent evaluation firm, was conducting focus groups, audience surveys and site visits to learn about the impact of the projects. Their January 2006 report confirms that California Stories projects helped promote a sense of community among participants.

In the case of our multiyear Communities Speak projects, 82 percent of respondents reported greater commitments to civic dialogue as a result of participating in a project. And some Communities Speak participants who took part in focus groups reported that the projects made them more aware of issues facing their communities and said that the projects taught them more about their own history and culture.

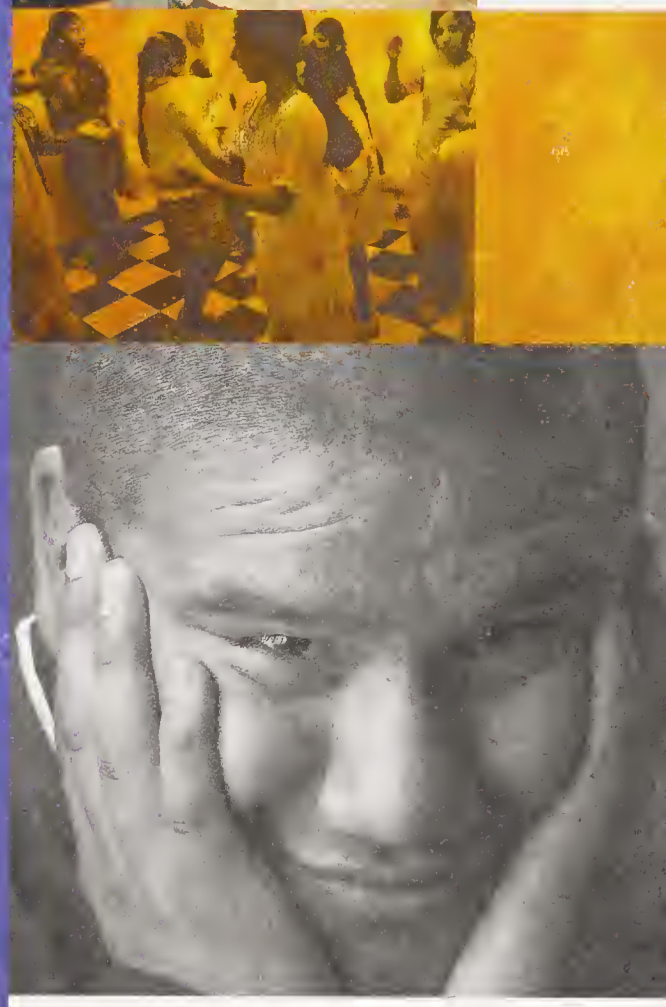
Focus group participants also said that the projects gave them a new respect for what makes people different and helped promote tolerance within their communities.

Our California Stories projects have also fostered community partnerships and collaborations among diverse community organizations. In many cases, organizations that had never worked together before became partners, as happened in Marin County, where a leading arts organization teamed up with a public housing agency. Findings from interviews with project partners reveal that the majority believe that their communities have been strengthened as a result of Communities Speak projects and attribute this to a project's ability to involve diverse communities and raise awareness of a community's local history.

Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam, author of "Bowling Alone," has praised the role of cultural programs, saying that they are an important complement to the "civic broccoli" of public hearings and school board meetings. But people typically attend those events from a sense of duty, while our audiences are highly enthusiastic about California Stories programs, and, indeed, wish there were more of them. We, of course, recognize that communities are strong because of a variety of factors, but we believe that cultural programs are an important part of the mix and especially important in the highly diverse neighborhoods and towns of California.

As you read what the various California Stories programs accomplished during 2004 and 2005, we hope you will be encouraged to support and attend programs in your own community. Needless to say, we're pleased to have evidence beyond our own convictions showing that public humanities programs can make good things happen. Because of our dynamic and diverse population, strengthening community has been a challenge for Californians, in the past, as now. But with the generous spirit that animates California Stories, we are hopeful about the future.

James Quay
Executive Director



Far left: A door in Santa Ana, as seen by young photographer Sam Flores.
Above top: "Eyes of New California," an exhibit of photographs by immigrant and refugee youth, opened at the San Francisco Public library with a lively event featuring African drumming.
Above middle: An exhibit on Sikh history and life in California provided insight into a little-known community. Here Sikh women enjoy traditional Punjabi folk dancing in Yuba City.
Above bottom: Rocco Marten Murillo, from a P'urepecha community in Paso Robles, documented his life for an immigrant teen photography project.

IMMIGRANT YOUTHS TURN CAMERAS ON THEIR LIVES

FIVE PROJECTS INVOLVING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE TEENS HIGHLIGHTED THE COUNCIL'S APRIL 2005 CALIFORNIA STORIES UNCOVERED CAMPAIGN.

THE NEW CALIFORNIANS STORY PROJECT

Above right: Paso Robles High School coach and mentor Maria Contreras, as photographed by Estela Campoverde, a participant in a project about a P'urepecha community in Paso Robles.
Above top: Fourteen-year old Armel Mampouya, originally from the Congo, took this photo of his brother for a San Francisco Bay Area teen photography project.
Above bottom: Natalie Zotova, one of the participants in a project with Russian youth in West Hollywood, with her mother, Natasha.
Photo sequence: Yaroslav Malev, originally from Ukraine, took this shot of his Tenderloin neighborhood.

Working with award-winning writers and photographers, teens in five communities explored their cross-cultural identities and their experiences as newcomers by photographing and writing about their families and neighborhoods. The project culminated with public exhibits in Santa Ana, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, West Hollywood and Riverside.

In Santa Ana, high school seniors, most born in Mexico or Central America, worked with professional photographers and poets to document their lives. The culminating exhibit of photographs and short essays was held at the Orange County Courthouse Museum in downtown Santa Ana. "The exhibit was huge for the kids," remembered Allison Miller, a poet connected to PoetryXChange, the project sponsor. "A lot of the kids think that people don't care about their stories, so it surprised them that people found them interesting. I think it changed the way they think about themselves."

In the San Francisco Bay area, five teens from five immigrant backgrounds worked with documentary photographer Rick Rocamora to produce photo essays of their lives. The young documentarians included 13-year-old Ukrainian-born Yaroslav Malev, who focused on the inner-city Tenderloin neighborhood where he lives; 19-year-old Ghita Riane, from Morocco, who chronicled her emancipation from foster home life; and 15-year old Armel Mampouya, a native of the Congo, who took moving photos of his family. The photographs were exhibited at a local gallery and at the San Francisco Public Library.

In San Luis Obispo, 15 youths from a little-know settlement of P'urepecha people documented their community here and in San Juan Nuevo Parangaricutiro, Mexico, where they still have deep roots. Almost 400 people showed up to see the final exhibit of 43 photographs in the Oak Park Recreation Center in the housing complex where many of the youths live. The young photographers were apprehensive at first about having their work publicly displayed, but that didn't last long. "People kept coming up to us to say how much they liked the photos," remembered 18-year-old participant Jaasmin Landin, "and that made us feel good."

Above: A church in Santa Ana, as seen through the eyes of teen photographer Sam Flores.
Above inset: Self portrait by Leonardo Lara, a La Sierra High School student in Riverside.
Below: A shoemaker at work in Santa Ana, captured by high school student Gabriela Esqueda.

In West Hollywood, Russian-speaking youths from Azerbaijan, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine told about their lives in photographs and words, introducing outsiders to a little-known community. "Russian-speaking refugees and immigrants make up a significant portion of the population in West Hollywood, but they are relatively invisible," said Project Director Lynn Warshafsky, executive director of Venice Arts, an organization working to bring talented artists together with young people. "This project provided an opportunity for the Russian-speaking community to tell their stories through the eyes of youth."

FINDINGS FROM SURVEYS OF THE YOUNG PARTICIPANTS IN THE NEW CALIFORNIANS STORY PROJECT REVEAL THAT THE PROGRAM WAS A HUGE HIT, WITH SOME 96 PERCENT RATING THEIR EXPERIENCES AS HIGHLY SATISFYING. Results also show that the projects gave the young participants a much greater appreciation of their worth to their communities. Indeed, when presented with the statement at the beginning of the project, "Who I am and where I come from is important to my community," only 59 percent of those surveyed agreed with it, while 82 percent agreed with the statement at the completion of the project.

The long-term impact is harder to measure. Social worker and educator Pedro Arroyo, who directed the project in San Luis Obispo, talked about the effect of his project after the culminating exhibit was held in April. "It may take the kids a while to realize what they have accomplished," he said. "But I think it helped them find their voice."

In Riverside, 19 La Sierra High School students from diverse cultures and traditions — Mexican, Argentinian, Iraqi, Vietnamese, Brazilian, Palestinian and Korean — participated in a series of seven workshops in which they explored their culture and identity with the help of a professional photographer, videographer and installation artist. In an exercise on "culture clash," the teens were given two weeks to gather evidence of their own cultural situation, speaking with family members, gathering objects and images, and writing in their journals. "What they discovered," said Project Director John Worden, executive director of the Mission Inn Foundation, "is that cultural overlap, the blend of culture, is everywhere in their lives." An exhibit of the teens' work was held at the Mission Inn Museum in Riverside in April.

WRITING ABOUT LIFE IN CALIFORNIA

WHAT IS LIFE LIKE IN CALIFORNIA FOR NEWCOMERS? TO FIND OUT, THE COUNCIL SPONSORED A LETTERS HOME CONTEST AS PART OF ITS APRIL 2005 CALIFORNIA STORIES UNCOVERED CAMPAIGN, INVITING THOUSANDS OF READERS, LISTENERS AND VIEWERS OF ETHNIC MEDIA TO SUBMIT A LETTER HOME DESCRIBING LIFE IN CALIFORNIA. THE COUNCIL'S PARTNER IN THE EFFORT WAS NEW AMERICA MEDIA, A MEMBERSHIP ASSOCIATION OF 700 ETHNIC MEDIA OUTLETS ACROSS THE STATE.

Above left: Korean-born Young Ha poses with her two children before receiving a check for $1,000 as one of 12 winners of the Letters Home contest.
Above right: CCH Executive Director Jim Quay presents Camille Ramani of Upwardly Global with a certificate of appreciation for her involvement in the Letters Home contest.

Dozens of ethnic media organizations in the New America Media network, from the Japanese American newspaper Nichi Bei Times to India Post, Arab American Affairs and La Opinion, donated ad space to promote the contest. Some 200 entries were received in a dozen languages. Twelve Californians from Stockton to La Jolla, writing to friends and relatives in places as far afield as Guatemala, China and the Philippines, were each awarded $1,000. The winners, chosen by a panel of distinguished judges, received their awards at CCH-sponsored events around the state in April 2005.

The winning letters offered unique and varied perspectives about the way newcomers are adapting to life in California.

Writing to her parents in China about her adopted home of Stockton, Xia "Monica" Sun, who emigrated to study nursing less than a year ago, wrote, "Endless farmland here opens up my heart. All kinds of natural colors excite my brain. Birds flying leisurely in the sky bring harmony. The landscape seems to be a picture drawn with a magic wand ... I like the night view of the freeway. Lines of cars seem like a long dragon running fast on the broad highway."

Alex Montoya, a triple amputee now living in San Diego whose parents sent him to California as a young boy so he could obtain better medical care, wrote a thank-you letter to his parents in Colombia. "California is where I have been able to — just as you had hoped — attend school, join the workforce, build a career and engage in improving my community through public service. A disability here does not mean a preconceived notion of inability. If you dream it, you can become it."

And John Hodaro, who recently emigrated from Nigeria, described life in Los Angeles in a letter to his mother. "I decided after settling into my one-bedroom apartment in Hollywood to try to assimilate into the culture as soon as possible. I took out my little black book containing all the American slang words I learned from watching American movies back home. Then I put on the grey suit you bought me and hit the streets. The first person I saw was a young white man, and I walked up to him and said, 'Yo man. I wanna know everything about this town, dude. What's up?' He looked at me like I just dropped from outer space, and I soon realized that people took me more seriously when I talked in more normal ways."

CCH Executive Director Jim Quay, who presented the awards, said, "The letters are a mirror of the new California, written from the heart by old and young, immigrants and U.S.-born, full of excitement about the future, laced with yearning for home and those left behind."

CALIFORNIA STORIES UNCOVERED

IN THE CLASSROOM

Above left and bottom right: Students at Malcolm X Elementary School in South Berkeley created murals inspired by community stories.
Above middle: Students in an upper-level Chinese class in San Francisco showcased their stories on a school website.
Insert: A California map by a student at Marina del Rey Middle School.

Students in more than 2,000 California classrooms interviewed family and neighbors about their history, heritage and community, and then used their "found" stories as the basis for art, writing, theater and multimedia projects. Community events ranged from multimedia exhibits, performances and murals to a family writing night and intergenerational story-sharing programs.

At Malcolm X Elementary School in Berkeley, students created mural panels based on stories of community elders. A group of students at Merced High School created poetry based on their own life stories and those of their parents. At Galileo High School in San Francisco, students in an upper-level Chinese class, many of them immigrants from Taiwan or China, wrote about their high school experiences in both Chinese and English. "The project gave the kids a reason to stop and think about their lives," said first-year teacher Mindy Chiang. Chiang created a special website for the project, where she posted the students' stories "It was a way for immigrant kids to showcase their abilities to other kids at the school," she said.

ACCORDING TO EVALUATION DATA COLLECTED BY THE RESEARCH FIRM HARDER+COMPANY, THE WRITING PROGRAM WAS A SUCCESS WITH TEACHERS AND AUDIENCES ALIKE. TEACHERS GAVE HIGH MARKS TO THE MATERIALS AND REPORTED THAT THE PROGRAMS HELPED INSTILL A SENSE OF PRIDE IN THEIR STUDENTS. One teacher said, "Students and parents were very proud, and I think it helped build the students' self esteem. And what was nice was that many of the students had received little recognition before."

Students who attended project events were also enthusiastic and reported that the experience helped them better understand people with backgrounds different from their own. "Now I know how an immigrant kid feels when he goes to a new school," said one young respondent. Community members who attended events were also complimentary about the program. One respondent commented, "I noticed the pride that students felt about their community. They loved learning the history of their town." While another remarked, "I have a new realization of how many different cultures make up our community."

The Council's partner in the classroom program was the California Writing Project, an association of 30,000 California English teachers working to improve the teaching and learning of writing. A team of Writing Project teachers developed 10 sets of materials for classroom use, all available for downloading on the Council's website. The materials focused on such topics as growing up and finding an identity in a changing California, grappling with the challenges and realities of California life, and understanding how community, history and heritage have shaped present-day California.

CALIFORNIA STORIES UNCOVERED IN THE LIBRARY

FINDINGS FROM HARDER+COMPANY SHOW THAT A MAJORITY OF PARTICIPANTS FELT THAT THE PROGRAM INCREASED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF CALIFORNIA'S CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND STRENGTHENED THEIR SENSE OF COMMUNITY. Said one respondent, "It helped me be more understanding of the struggles of immigrants. I am now interested in hearing the stories of my Mexican family."

Above top: Writer Richard Rodriguez, author of "Brown: The Last Discovery of America," among other books, was featured at a writers in conversation event in San Francisco.
Above bottom: Francisco Jiménez, whose work is included in CCH's new anthology of California writing, poses here with students from La Sierra High School in Riverside at a California Stories Uncovered event.

In more than 200 events in April 2005, hundreds of teens, adults and whole families attended an array of events sponsored by California libraries as part of the Council's April 2005 California Stories Uncovered campaign.

A focal point for library programs was "California Uncovered: Stories for the 21st Century," a new anthology of 25 California writers, published especially for the campaign by the Council and independent publisher Heyday Books.

The anthology, edited by award-winning author Chitra Divakaruni, includes essays, poems and memoirs from John Steinbeck, Maxine Hong Kingston and Joan Didion as well as from such compelling new writers as lê thi diem thúy, Dao Strom, Yxta Maya Murray and Laila Halaby.

Library events ranged from oral history programs and photography exhibits to poetry slams and panel discussions.

In Pacifica, two local poets led Pacifica middle schoolers, high schoolers and adults in a community poetry slam. In Susanville, English learners read and discussed a selection from the new anthology and then used the reading as a springboard to creating poems and essays. In Lompoc, middle school students interviewed and photographed a family member or neighbor about their California story and then made a presentation to a library group. And in Riverside students from Martin Luther King High School met with members of the Eddie D. Smith Senior Center and then read and discussed stories from the anthology.

WRITERS IN CONVERSATION

In conjunction with the library program, eight anthology contributors — Chitra Divakaruni, Richard Rodriguez, Yxta Maya Murray, lê thi diem thùy, Laila Halaby, David Mas Masumoto, Francisco Jiménez and Rubén Martinez — appeared in conversation with Council Executive Director Jim Quay at libraries in nine cities: Cerritos, Los Angeles, Fresno, Riverside, Sacramento, San Jose, Chico, San Francisco and National City. These events provided an opportunity for members of the public to hear a noted writer's view of California and share their own stories.

Left: Chitra Divakaruni, editor of the Council's new anthology, "California Uncovered: Stories for the 21st Century." Divakaruni is the author of the best-selling "Mistress of Spices" and, most recently, "Queen of Dreams."
Top: Seven libraries in Alameda County participated in California Stories Uncovered, holding poetry workshops and sponsoring reading and discussion groups. Here the Alameda County Bookmobile advertises the April campaign.

ACCORDING TO FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION FIRM HARDER+COMPANY, MOST PARTICIPANTS BELIEVED THAT THE SESSIONS EXPOSED THEM TO NEW CALIFORNIA WRITERS, INCREASED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF CALIFORNIA'S CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND STRENGTHENED THEIR SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

Findings also reveal that many library events reached people who had never been to a reading program or discussion group before, with librarians reporting that many participants obtained new library cards as a result of the program.

Another project outcome was the opportunity for libraries to establish partnerships with outside organizations, including elementary, middle and high schools. According to library staff, such partnerships are beneficial because they help libraries attract more young people.

CALIFORNIA STORY FUND

THROUGH THE CALIFORNIA STORY FUND, THE COUNCIL HAS HELPED UNEARTH HUNDREDS OF LITTLE-KNOWN STORIES OF CALIFORNIA COMMUNITIES AND PROVIDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE STORIES AND THEIR MEANINGS. THE PROJECTS, CREATED IN A VARIETY OF FORMATS — FROM VIDEO AND PHOTOGRAPHY TO POETRY AND ART WORK — COVER A WIDE RANGE OF TOPICS AND INVOLVE PEOPLE OF VARIOUS AGES, ECONOMIC LEVELS AND ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS.

Above from left to right: Sikh youths assembled at the annual Punjabi Sikh festival in Yuba City; documenting the role of sports in the LGBT community in the San Francisco Bay Area; Jose "Flipchild" Saenz, Jaime Jacinto, Joel Tan and Kyle de Ocera presented stories about growing up Filipino American in California.

Far right from top: A group of Chumash young people, seen here with artist Manny Lopez, created artwork inspired by the stories of Santa Barbara ranches and nature preserves; artist Leif Aamot created this mural, based on the story of Mary Beth Washington, a professional storyteller in Berkeley; college and high school students documented the lives and working conditions of street vendors in East Los Angeles using photography, video and first-person interviews; Laverne Phillips, a waitress for more than 50 years, was featured in a San Francisco project celebrating the contributions of career waitresses.

Background photo: Sikh women pray at a temple in Yuba City.

MORE THAN 150 PROJECTS HAVE BEEN FUNDED SINCE THE CALIFORNIA STORY FUND WAS INAUGURATED IN 2002. THESE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2004 AND 2005:

In Berkeley, stories of seniors important to the history of the community were transformed into murals 4 feet square by community artists. The murals now adorn a school fence on a main street, where passersby can learn about the people who have made the community what it is today.

Over a period of 100 years, Indian Wells Valley in the northern Mojave Desert has been transformed from empty desert land to a high-tech community. Seventeen residents who have lived through the changes talk about the history of the area in "Indian Wells Valley: Somewhere on the Edge of Nowhere."

Descendants of Chumash Indians in Southern California talk about their culture and efforts to preserve it in a new film, "Coastal Chumash: Stories of Contemporary Native Americans," made by students at California Lutheran University.

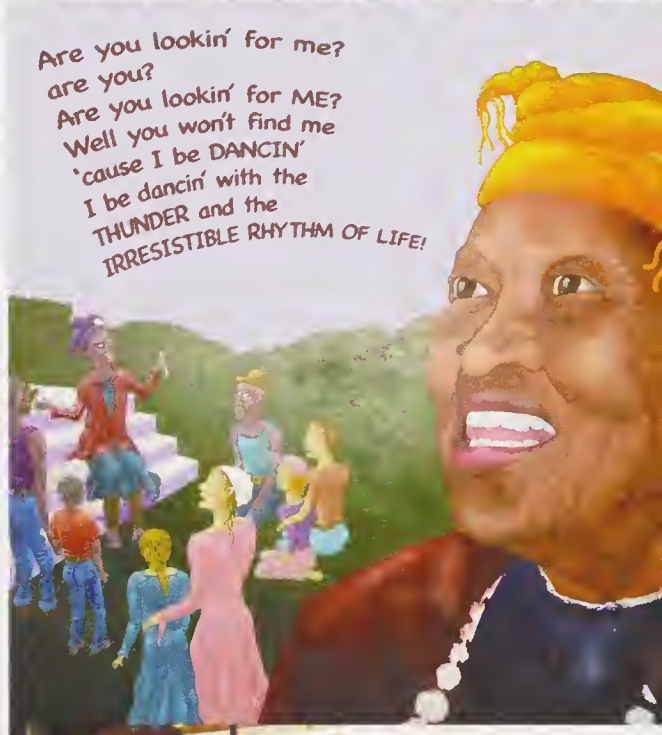
Students at Crawford High School in the East City Heights community of San Diego were trained in filmmaking, storytelling, interviewing and digital editing and then made short films about their families' immigration to the United States. The films were screened at Crawford High School and several venues in San Diego.

DATA COLLECTED FROM 82 PROJECTS REVEAL THAT ALMOST 3,000 CALIFORNIA STORY FUND PRESENTATIONS WERE MADE TO THE PUBLIC AND MORE THAN HALF A MILLION PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN ACTIVITIES. When surveyed, a majority of attendees said that they learned something new about their community, were interested in hearing others' stories of California as a result of the program, and believed that the program inspired lively discussion and enlarged their understanding of what it means to be a Californian.

Stories of Japanese Americans in the San Fernando Valley interned at Manzanar and other camps during World War II were transformed into a play called "Orange Blossoms in the Dust."

Students at Roosevelt High School and Los Angeles Trade Technical College documented the lives, contributions and living and working conditions of Los Angeles street vendors using photography, video and first-person interviews and then presented their work to the public at several community forums.

Teens and older adults in Glendale came together under the guidance of a teaching artist and local poet to create poems exploring their attitudes toward age, culture and life in California. They then presented their poems to the public at the historic Alex Theatre.


Are you lookin' for me?
are you?
Are you lookin' for ME?
Well you won't find me
'cause I be DANCIN'
I be dancin' with the
THUNDER and the
IRRESISTIBLE RHYTHM OF LIFE!

CALIFORNIA DOCUMENTARY PROJECT

THE CALIFORNIA DOCUMENTARY PROJECT WAS CREATED IN 2002 TO HELP FILMMAKERS, RADIO PRODUCERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS REVEAL IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF CALIFORNIA LIFE TO AUDIENCES THROUGHOUT THE STATE, THE COUNTRY AND OFTEN THE WORLD. THESE DARING AND INVENTIVE DOCUMENTARIANS OFTEN DISCOVER IMPORTANT ISSUES AND UNKNOWN STORIES AND PROVIDE NEW WAYS OF LOOKING AT THINGS.

In the new film "Romántico," nominated for a 2006 Independent Spirit Award, filmmaker Mark Becker follows Mexican musician Carmelo Muniz as he goes from restaurant to restaurant in San Francisco playing love songs for tips, and later returns to his family in Mexico, where he tries to earn enough money for a return trip to the States. "Through Carmelo's eyes the viewer comes to understand why the 60-year-old first chose to leave his beloved family and cross the desert borderlands," Becker said.

In "The Tailenders," filmmaker Adele Horne examines a missionary organization's use of ultra-low-tech audio devices to evangelize indigenous communities facing crises caused by global economic forces. "The missionaries target communities in crisis because they have found that displaced and desperate people are especially receptive to the evangelical recordings," Horne said. "The Tailenders" will air nationally on PBS in summer 2006.

In "Grassroots Rising," filmmaker Robert Winn looks at how low-wage Asian Pacific Islander immigrant workers are struggling to improve their lives through community-based organizing. "These workers are reshaping the city through their activism and involvement with innovative worker centers and organizations," Winn said.

And in the four-part series "Beyond the Dream: California and the Rediscovery of America," four filmmakers look at conflict and change in California, examining Indian gaming; the impact of redevelopment on a transitional urban neighborhood in San Diego; the shifting political ground in Los Angeles, where Antonio Villaraigosa recently became the city's first Latino mayor; and the intersection of food production and politics in California over the past 30 years. "We think these stories are important not just for California, but the country as a whole as the rest of the country becomes more diverse," said series co-producer Paul Espinosa. PBS will air "Beyond the Dream" in spring 2006.

Council-funded photography projects included "The New Okies," Melinda Burns's photographic tribute to today's immigrant farmworkers who follow in the footsteps of the Dust Bowl refugees and Mexican *braceros* before them; "Paving Paradise: Stories from the Santa Ana Watershed," Sant Khalsa's view of the largest coastal stream system in California and its role within surrounding communities; "Life Cycles: Reflections of Change and a New Hope for Future Generations," Jacalyn Lopez Garcia's chronicle of seven migrant families in *colonias,* rural communities in the Southeastern deserts of California; and the photography and writing project "From Where I'm Standing," which involved Latino teens and preteens in East Los Angeles in documenting their experiences under the guidance of photographer Gail Brown.

In radio, frequent NPR commentator David Greenberger, for a new Council-supported radio documentary to be aired on NPR in 2006, is interviewing elderly people in East Los Angeles about the challenges of making a life in California. Other radio projects in production include "Pastures of Plenty," a multipart series on the history of California's agricultural workers, and "Saving the Sierra," about community-based conservationists working together for a better Sierra.

The California Documentary Project builds on the Council's long history of support for film and radio documentary projects, which has produced many award-winning films, including 15 Academy Award nominees. Throughout the years, Council-supported films have also been selected for screenings at prestigious film festivals, including the Sundance, Los Angeles and Munich festivals.

Said CCH Executive Director Jim Quay, "These projects are opening windows into the unseen lives of a diverse group of Californians and bringing both their struggles and their achievements to our attention."

Top far left: In Mark Becker's film "Romántico," Carmelo Muniz and his musical partner, Arturo Arias, go from one San Francisco restaurant to another playing love songs for tips.
Lower left: Strawberry pickers work quickly before a rainstorm begins in a Santa Maria area field.
Photo sequence: A woman in Mexico listens to a Gospel recording in "The Tailenders."
Clockwise from top: Flooded streets behind the Prado Dam in the Santa Ana watershed; an exhibit of photos by residents of a San Francisco single-room occupancy hotel draws this visitor from the neighborhood; a cardboard record player used to evangelize indigenous communities; in a search for an affordable place to live in Santa Cruz County, Juan Mendoza resorted to standing on a busy street holding a "house wanted" sign; Joann Lo in front of an anti-sweatshop billboard in "Grassroots Rising."

COMMUNITIES SPEAK

COMMUNITIES SPEAK, A MAJOR COMPONENT OF CALIFORNIA STORIES, CONSISTED OF EIGHT MULTIYEAR PROJECTS ACROSS THE STATE DESIGNED TO ADDRESS CRITICAL ISSUES IN TARGETED COMMUNITIES. COMMUNITIES SPEAK PROJECTS TOOK PLACE OVER A THREE-YEAR PERIOD, FROM 2002 TO 2005, AND ADDRESSED A RANGE OF ISSUES, FROM THE CRISIS IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN MARIN TO THE EFFECTS OF DEVELOPMENT ON PEOPLE IN THE INLAND EMPIRE.

Top: The Wong family, one of 18 families interviewed for "Stockton Speaks," a three-year project exploring the city's many cultures.
Middle: The South Los Angeles Communities Speak project attracted interns and work-study students interested in making a difference in their communities.
Bottom: Teens in the OMI neighborhood of San Francisco interviewed people in their community as part of "I Am OMI."

Three generations of Stockton residents — grandparents, parents and young people — shared their stories of coming of age as part of "Stockton Speaks." The story-sharers represented nine ethic groups: African American, Chinese American, Italian American, Japanese American, Filipino American, Mexican American, Cambodian American, Hmong American and Native American. "The challenge in such a multicultural city as Stockton is to find a way to bridge the city's many cultures," said Project Director Bob Benedetti, a professor of political science at the University of the Pacific and executive director of the university's Jacoby Center for Community and Regional Studies.

In all, the project collected 54 interviews from 18 families. The stories were edited by students in a writing class at the University of the Pacific. "It was a way to get students involved in the community," Benedetti said.

FINDINGS FROM AUDIENCE SURVEYS CONDUCTED BY HARDER+ COMPANY REVEALED THAT ALMOST 80 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS BELIEVED THAT THE PROJECT HELPED THEM SEE THEMSELVES AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR COMMUNITY. And findings from focus groups revealed that many participants thought that the project helped people shed misconceptions about other cultures and led to increased tolerance.

The San Francisco-based project "I Am OMI" used history and stories to help three small polarized neighborhoods — Ocean View, Merced Heights and Ingleside — develop a sense of unity. The project also gave a group of neighborhood youths a chance to learn more about their neighborhood and explore their own lives through a summer video camp.

Stories were collected from more than 60 residents and a number of events were held to present the stories to the community. Project Director Woody LaBounty said that many OMI groups began working together as a result of the project and that it even resulted in a revitalized merchants association "The general attitude in the OMI is much more optimistic and hopeful since the project," LaBounty said.

EVALUATION FINDINGS FROM HARDER+COMPANY CONFIRM LABOUNTY'S OPTIMISM. OMI YOUTHS WHO PARTICIPATED IN A FOCUS GROUP SAID THAT THE PROJECT HELPED STRENGTHEN THE OMI COMMUNITY BECAUSE IT GAVE PEOPLE A SENSE OF PRIDE ABOUT WHERE THEY LIVE AND HELPED BUILD RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEOPLE. And organization partners who were interviewed identified a number of project benefits, including a greater willingness to become involved in local events and activities and an increase in the number of relationships among different groups within the OMI community.

"Finding Marin: Stories of Home" used stories to look at the issue of affordable housing in Marin County, one of the most expensive housing markets in the nation. Stories were gathered from residents of many different backgrounds and walks of life, from artists and environmentalists to new immigrants. An exhibit of participants' stories and photographs took place at the Marin Community Foundation and Marin Civic Center.

THE PROJECT INVOLVED A NUMBER OF COMMUNITY GROUPS, MANY OF WHICH WORKED TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME. A representative of the Ecumenical Association for Housing said that her organization never thought about using the humanities in its work but now thinks they could be a critical component. The project appears to have made an impact on participants and audiences alike. According to audience surveys, some 94 percent of respondents said they planned to tell others what they learned at project events. And focus group participants reported that the project stirred them to educate others about the housing issue and made them interested in becoming politically involved.

People who live along a 200-mile stretch of the I-10 freeway in the Inland Empire made their voices heard as part of "Living on the Dime," a project examining the impact of the freeway on people's lives. "From Bloomington to Blythe, people are living with the results of continuous freeway construction and development since the 1950s at the expense of rural towns and older suburban neighborhoods," Project Director Robert Gonzales said. "This project educated people about the area's little-known history, but also connected them to individuals, groups and entire communities working to improve the economic and social health of the area, balance growth with more just environmental practices, and create greater awareness of the importance of land stewardship."

Top: Migrant youths used video to explore social issues affecting their lives in "Tu Voz."
Middle: The Alayas settled in Marin County for the wealth of opportunities it provided their children. Their story was part of "Marin Stories" about the area's affordable housing crisis.
Bottom: "Living on the Dime," a project in the Inland Empire, examined the effect of the I-10 freeway on people's lives.

CONTINUED

COMMUNITIES SPEAK

Above right: Ricardo Antonio Cuevas, along with his father and grandfather, was interviewed for "Stockton Speaks."
Above top: Maria Aguilar, seen here in her church in Chula Vista, talked about the role of faith in her life as part of "Stories of Faith."
Above middle: Hal Embshoff, one of the participants in "Living on the Dime," makes horseradish by hand in this shop across from the I-10 in Banning, in his family for more than 50 years.
Above bottom: Jesús Suarez del Solar, one of the first casualties of the Iraq War, is the subject of "Un Soldado Mexicano," a video made as part of "Tu Voz."

THE PROJECT HELD 50 PUBLIC PROGRAMS, INCLUDING 15 COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS, SIX EXHIBITS OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORIES, AND FIVE STORYTELLING EVENTS. "The programs inspired people to connect or strengthen bonds with their communities," Gonzales said. Findings from Harder+Company confirm the impact of the project. According to audience surveys, 90 percent of respondents said they planned to talk to their friends and family about the project, and more than 50 percent said they planned to become more involved in the region's issues.

Focus group participants reported that the project helped build relationships among people who typically see themselves as different from one another. And one of the project's organizational partners said that the project helped people feel more connected to one another and led to greater participation in politics related to local development issues.

More than 30 events explored the role of religion in the lives of San Diegans as part of "Stories of Faith: Religion and Diversity in San Diego." With a population among the most diverse in the nation, San Diego is home to people from a wide variety of faiths, from Buddhists and Rastafarians to Bahais and Mormons. "Religion is important to talk about, no matter what our beliefs," said Project Director Lynn Whitehouse.

THE PROJECT INVOLVED 18 LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE, THE BAHAI COMMUNITY OF SAN DIEGO AND THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS. According to audience surveys, 80 percent of respondents reported that they identified more with their community because of what they learned through the project. And focus group participants reported that "Stories of Faith" expanded their thinking about religious faith, and that the project gave them new perspectives and better understanding of the community in which they live.

At-risk high school students in northern San Diego County, many from migrant families, created more than 60 videos on issues of importance to their lives as part of "Tu Voz." The videos tell of U.S. Marine Jesús Suarez del Solar, who died during the Iraq war, of Sherman Heights residents as they respond to development pressures and rising rents, and of one immigrant group's efforts to get an ambulance donated to its home town in Mexico. "We wanted young people to see that they could play a direct role in shaping their communities by using video as a tool for change," said Project Director Ethan Van Thillo, executive director of Media Arts Center San Diego. The videos have been broadcast on television and shown to various schools and community groups.

YOUNG PARTICIPANTS WHO TOOK PART IN FOCUS GROUPS OVERWHELMINGLY SAID THAT THE PROJECT INCREASED THEIR SENSE OF PRIDE IN THEIR FAMILY BACKGROUND AND GAVE THEM TECHNICAL SKILLS THEY COULD USE IN THE FUTURE. Organizations involved in the programs said that the project gave participants critical thinking skills and a sense of empowerment.

"From Generation to Generation: Making a Life in South Los Angeles, 1940–2005" sought to strengthen the South Los Angeles community by correcting misconceptions about the area and increasing understanding of its history and changing demographics. "The media has stigmatized the area by portraying it as completely crime-ridden," said former Project Director Alexis Moreno. "We wanted to give residents, particularly young people, a sense of how the community has come to be the way it is, and help engender a sense of community pride. They need to see that history is made by people like them and that they can change things." Events included a four-part film series on L.A. youth culture and a series of community forums on various aspects of South L.A.'s history.

FINDINGS FROM AUDIENCE SURVEYS REVEALED THAT ALMOST 98 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS PLAN TO TELL OTHERS WHAT THEY LEARNED AT PROJECT EVENTS AND THAT 95 PERCENT SAID THEY PLANNED TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN THEIR COMMUNITY. Focus group participants reported that they believed the project had an impact on the community because it made people realize the importance of history. And they said further that they think the project helped empower people who don't normally feel that their life story is important.

"Guadalupe Speaks" sought to use oral history interviews with a broad group of ethnically diverse long-term residents to help revitalize the small, mostly agricultural coastal town of Guadalupe, in economic decline since the early 1980s.

Serving as interviewers for the project were students in the Ethnic Studies Department at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, and teen members of the Keystone Club at the local Boys and Girls Club. The owner of a local multimedia company videotaped the interviews and turned them into a documentary for showing at community events.

The interviews covered a range of topics and included stories about the changing living and working conditions for farmworkers and the experience of Guadalupe residents during World War II, when entire families of Japanese American ranchers were taken away to internment camps. "The stories gave young people and Guadalupe newcomers insight into the history of the area and a better understanding of its many ethnic groups," said Project Director Karen Evangelista.

ACCORDING TO AUDIENCE SURVEYS AT "GUADALUPE SPEAKS" EVENTS, 94 PERCENT BELIEVED THAT THE PROJECT RAISED THEIR AWARENESS OF THE TOWN'S HISTORY WHILE 81 PERCENT INDICATED THE PROJECT MADE THEM THINK THEY COULD MOLD THE COMMUNITY'S FUTURE. Focus group participants reported that one of the primary effects of the project was the way it increased community engagement. And project partners who were interviewed said that the project increased people's knowledge of how the community had changed over the years and bolstered people's sense of pride in Guadalupe.

Top: Teens in South Los Angeles talk to film Director Martin Sorrendeguy after a video and discussion program called "From Zoot Suit to Hip Hop." **Bottom:** Kids from the OMI neighborhood of San Francisco pose with project leader Amanda Herman after their videos are screened for the community

CALIFORNIA STORIES
2004-2005

THROUGH CALIFORNIA STORIES, THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE COMING TOGETHER TO SHARE THEIR OWN STORIES AND HEAR THE STORIES OF THEIR FELLOW CALIFORNIANS. FOR SOME TIME, THE COUNCIL HAD ONLY ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE AND A STRONG CONVICTION THAT STORY-SHARING COULD MAKE IMPORTANT THINGS HAPPEN IN COMMUNITIES.

Now the results of an independent study show that story-based programs can help develop a sense of community among participants and move people to become more involved in their communities. This is good news and confirms for us that humanities programs have a key role to play in building stronger California communities. By bringing people together in new ways, these programs can actually move us to work together to create a more vital and livable California for this and future generations.

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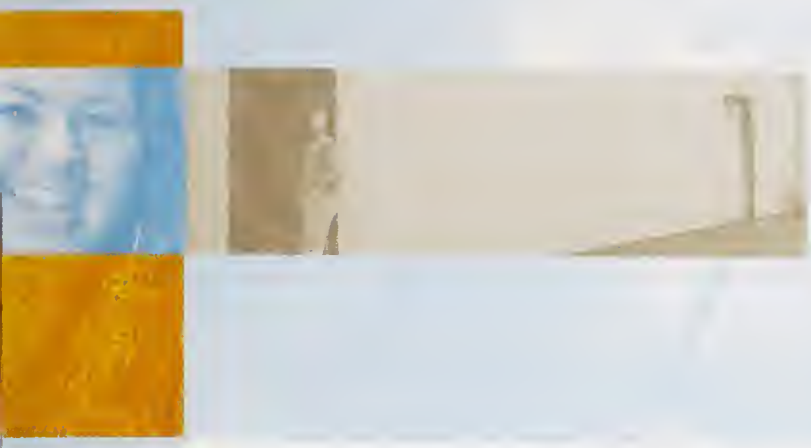

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Far left: Thirteen-year old Jan Tancinco, whose family is from the Philippines, took this photo of her father and sister for "Eyes of New California." **Top middle sequence:** Members of the renowned Chambrey Chorale added their stories to the history of African American sacred music performance; Jasmin Landin, part of a P'urepecha community in Paso Robles, documented her life in both Mexico and the United States; Darla Jan Holst, a participant in "Marin Stories," standing in front of the storage building where she once kept her belongings. **Above:** A mural by artist Michael Jacobson, based on the stories of South Berkeley senior Margo Norman, an artist, actress, poet and activist.

DONORS

Above top right: Car interior, by Santa Ana teenager Diego Lopez.
Above top: Interior shot from the documentary film "Romantico."
Above middle: A Russian couple in West Hollywood, as captured by Belarus-born Daniel Korochkin-Zoryn for a photography project involving Russian immigrant youth.
Above bottom: Ronnie Bello, a participant in a story project about career waitresses, has waited tables for over 40 years.
Far right: ROTC students on the grounds of Santa Ana High School, captured by young photographer Orlando Vences.

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The California Council for the Humanities is grateful to the attorneys of Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe for their generous gift of legal services.

FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION	FISCAL YEAR 2005 (Nov 1, 2004 - Oct 31, 2005)	FISCAL YEAR 2004 (Nov 1, 2003 - Oct 31, 2004)
ASSETS		
Current Assets	$ 891,484	$ 1,226,681
Fixed Assets	26,862	36,085
TOTAL ASSETS	**918,346**	**1,262,766**
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Current Liabilities	453,924	422,168
Net Assets	464,422	840,598
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	**$ 918,346**	**$ 1,262,766**

STATEMENT OF REVENUE, SUPPORT AND EXPENSES	FISCAL YEAR 2005 (Nov 1, 2004 - Oct 31, 2005)	FISCAL YEAR 2004 (Nov 1, 2003 - Oct 31, 2004)
REVENUE AND SUPPORT		
National Endowment for the Humanities	$ 1,370,582	$ 1,911,756
Contributions	379,099	150,956
Other Income	12,748	9,341
TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUES	**1,762,429**	**2,072,053**
EXPENSES		
Program Expenses		
Program Services	853,726	854,376
Grants	570,444	473,420
TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES	**1,424,170**	**1,327,796**
Management and General	610,599	511,687
Fundraising	103,836	134,915
TOTAL EXPENSES	**2,138,605**	**1,974,398**
CHANGES IN NET ASSETS	(376,176)	97,655
Net Assets Beginning of Year	840,598	742,943
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	$ 464,422	$ 840,598

A full audit report issued by Izabal, Bernaciak & Company is available upon request. Please contact the California Council for the Humanities' San Francisco office.

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From far left: In the film "Romántico," 60-year-old musician Carmelo Muniz leaves San Francisco and returns to Mexico but soon finds he can't adequately support his family. Seen here in Mexico are Carmelo's wife and youngest daughter; the Podesta family of Stockton, of Northern Italian heritage, participated in "Stockton Speaks"; Terrie Harris Green, a participant in "Marin Stories," has lived in Marin County all her life and said that her children won't be able to afford to live there.

The mission of the California Council for the Humanities is to foster understanding between people and encourage their engagement in community life through the public use of the humanities.

The Council is an independent, not-for-profit state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, supported through a public-private partnership that includes funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities, private foundations and corporations. The Council also receives essential support from individuals.

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Background photo: "This is the tunnel that leads to my school. One side represents San Juan Bautista and the other side California. I go through the tunnel to get to school, where there are few Mexican students and not many people speak Spanish. I feel trapped. At school I have to watch what I wear because people will think I'm in a gang. I have to watch what I say because people will think I am talking about them badly. When I get out of school and go back through the tunnel, I feel free and comfortable because I am around family and friends, who understand my culture and language."
— Jasmin Landin, a participant in a photography project about a little-known P'urepecha community in Paso Robles.

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